New Fiction in Varied Forms

CARNAC'S FOLLY. By Sir Gilbert Parker. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company.

ONE is tempted to see in this a definite allegory, a symbolism that may, possibly, have been beyond Sir Gilbert's open intent, though obviously that symbolism was a part of his purpose in writing the novel. We have types here, rather than individuals—not that their individuality is feebly drawn, for they are more than types, yet one thinks of them first as generalizations rather than as personalities. We see the younger generations of the Canada of to-day in contrast with their forbears; and the new ideals of commerce and of statemanship are also contrasted, and compared with each other, as well as with the politics and business of the day of the fathers. It is highly successful, broad, comprehensive in outline, without being shadowy, and although there is also a certain loss of sharpness and poignancy of individual emotion in such a method there are compensations.

Francis R. Bellamy, author of "A Flash of Gold."

The Countess de Chambrun, author of "Playing With Soul."

Geoffrey Dennis, author of "Mary Lee."

The reader feels, too, that in so drawing them Sir Gilbert knows his Canada, past and present, and is very hopeful of the future. He makes his younger folk finer fibered and yet really stronger than their ancestors, yet he does ample justice to that which is passing away. It is not in disparagement of the older generation that the new one will build, or is building, but it is made plain that the new building is to be better. He accords to each generation a generous supply of faults and weaknesses. Thus his strong young man, Luke Tarboe, is not above trickery, and there is an undisciplined streak in Carnac Grier (though, possibly, Sir Gilbert is himself imperfectly aware of it) at the end. The young woman, Junia, must pose—if we are to allegorize completely—as a glorified figure of young Canada herself. And in the climax she accepts both these young Canadian giants, each in his way.

"Oh, you two good men," she said joyously and held out her hand to each.

It is a striking tableau. It makes the effect of dignified, even grandiose mural decoration, whether Sir Gilbert actually intended an esoteric meaning to be so prominent or not.

But it is not necessary to insist upon this symbolism to make the book vividly attractive. If we take the people simply for themselves, without regard to their broader typical meaning, they show Sir Gilbert's power of insight into the deeper moods and emotions of humanity, and the tale also has charm in its manner. The central figure, Carnac Grier, is supposed to be the son of an old and very wealthy lumber man and financial magnate, John Grier. Carnac is artistic and very capable; he makes his own way by his art without trouble. There has always been a singular, deeprooted antipathy between him and his supposed father, old John. But at one time Carnac comes into his father's big business and helps him through a crisis, staying just long enough to show that he can do it, if he wants to, and then drops out again, to old John's disgust.

Grier then takes up the young Tarboe and ultimately makes him heir to the great property. Grier is the typical man of big business and efficiency. "I tell you," he assures Carnac, "the only thing worth doing is making the things that matter in the commerce and politics of the world. . . . What's commerce without politics? It's politics that makes the commerce possible." He is naturally contemptuous of Carnac's art. Pointing to a statue he remarks: "I won't say it ain't good. It's a live man from the river. But what do I want with that when I can have the original man himself? My boy, the great game of life is to fight hard and never give in."

Parallel with John Grier is the more romantically interesting figure of Barode Barouche, the Quebec politician or statesman, a potent minister and puller of wires, the diplomat of the old school. And it develops that in fact Carnac is really the illegitimate son of this Barode Barouche, though no one but Barouche and Carnac's mother, Mrs. Grier, know this. In the course of Carnac's finding himself he too goes into politics and eventually is pitted against Barouche in a Parliamentary election, and wins. Barouche is the most subtly done character in the book, and shows a more marked individuality than the others. At the climax of his electioneering contest with Carnac, whom he knows to be his own son, he is tempted to use the knowledge he also has of Carnac's foolish, even tragic marriage, to start a scandal that probably would defeat him. But he does not use it and is glad, in the end, that he did not, though a mere accident prevented its use. He is, however, entirely selfish. He has no submerged fondness for his son, no pride or affection for him, and it is the bitterest edge of his political defeat that his conqueror is this unacknowledged son. Barouche's statesmanship is Machiavellian. "It was no good only to serve the public, for democracy is a weak stick on which to lean. One must stand by individuals or there is no defense against the malicious foes that follow the path of defeat." His accidental death follows with tragic swiftness upon his loss of the election.

Carnac's "folly" lay partly in a freak marriage in his early art student days. He is finally cleared of it through the help of the girl, Junia, whom he loves. Tarboe, his rival in business, is also a rival here, but of course Carnac wins, and the two men also manage to preserve their friendship—which is the climax of the book.

In the letter of explanation which Mrs. Grier, Carnac's mother, writes him after Barouche's death one may find a key to the allegory of the whole. She tells him: "You have a chance to carry on with honor what he did with skill"—an admonition to the young statesmen to do better than their predecessors have done.

H. L. PANGBORN.

THE TALE OF TRIONA. By William J. Locke. Dodd, Mead & Co.

IN the title of what still remains his best novel, "The Beloved Vagabond," Mr. Locke has epitomized his unfailing formula, his trick of tricks, for disarming his reader and securing his allegiance. His heroes, to be sure, are not all vagabonds or mountebanks; but they are all abnormal, eccentric, disturbing elements in any placid, conventional community. Mr. Locke shows you their worst side quite frankly at the start; he even mildly exaggerates. Then, as he subtly proceeds to throw on the softening sidelights, you find yourself making excuses, finding indulgence for the amiable reprobate of attractive egotist, as the case may be—and presently you have taken him to your heart.

Alexis Triona is one of the best examples of the success of this method. He is what plain spoken folk would call a colossal liar. He lies smoothly, convincingly, picturesquely and without any compulsion—excepting in so far as a lie to be successful must be bolstered up by other lies. He has leaped into sudden fame as the author of an amazing war book, a personal narrative of nameless sufferings as a prisoner in Russian military camps. His name is on the lips of all London; every one is eager to lionize this new genius who, although a naturalized Russian, is an Englishman by birth and has pictured his martyrdom with the vivid color of an artist and the cadenced prose of a poet. In point of fact Alexis Triona is counterfeit from start to finish; his book, his sufferings, his alleged Russian citizenship, his very name are figments of his nimble brain. A few years earlier he was just plain John Briggs, a "ragged, semi-ignorant, seafaring English lout," whose roving disposition presently landed him in Russia as courier chauffeur of a Prince, whose personal interest gave his protege opportunity for education and self-development. When the war broke out chance presently put Briggs into a British uniform, and the armistice found him still on Russian soil with a British naval rating. He might always have remained John Briggs but for his finding one day beside a dead Russian, a fat little black covered "diary of amazing adventures." That diary, translated into highly imaginative English, was Triona's open sesame to London society.

If Olivia Gale had not been an ultra-modern girl, with her own share of wanderlust, she might have stagnated in the modest country home her dead father left her along with some shares in a business corporation. But Olivia refused to stagnate. Despite the dismay and protest of her two devoted old friends and trustees she insisted upon renting the house, selling her shares and enjoying life while the money lasted. In London she meets Triona, on the topmost crest of his first vogue. Like Desdemona she loves him for his past sufferings; and Triona, refreshing his memory from the fat little diary, gives her a private version so beautifully keyed up to meet her expectations that he rushes her through courtship, wedding and honeymoon on record time.

Now the theme of success achieved from a stolen manuscript is a fairly familiar theme in fiction. One recalls, among other cases, "The Giant's Robe," which was one of the best sellers a couple of decades ago. Where Triona's case is exceptional is that his stolen robe is none too large for the shoulders of so gigantic a liar. And when, elated by this first success, he follows it with a work that is frankly fiction, he

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